

California Habitat Conservation Planning Coalition

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December 10th 2009

Sustainable Communities Planning Grant and Incentives Program
c/o The Department of Conservation
Office of Sustainability
801 K Street, MS 24-01
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Strategic Growth Council:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft guidelines for the Sustainable Communities Planning Grant and Incentives Program. I provide these comments on behalf of the California Habitat Conservation Planning Coalition, a newly formed state-wide coalition whose participants include local government entities, NGOs and businesses who are preparing and implementing large-scale habitat conservation plans throughout California

It is important to include grants for preparing Natural Community Conservation Plans (NCCPs) in this program. These plans are prepared under state law by local jurisdictions and special districts, in partnership with stakeholders and state and federal wildlife agencies. Typically a NCCP covers a County or a large portion of a County.

NCCPs provide protection of wildlife habitat and functional ecosystems. They also provide streamlined permitting for development and infrastructure projects and help guide future development away from biologically sensitive areas.

NCCPs are consistent with the state's planning priorities and meet the eligibility criteria of these guidelines as they:

- protect, preserve and enhance environmental, agricultural and environmental resources;
- foster resource efficient location of new growth, including infill development; and
- support smart growth objectives, thereby helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

A number of county-scale NCCPs are currently in the planning phase in the Bay Area, the Sacramento metropolitan region and elsewhere in California. Additional counties are considering or have initiated NCCP preparation. Planning grants are critical to ensure

completion of plans that are in preparation and to encourage the preparation of additional NCCPs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "John Hopkins", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John Hopkins, Ph.D.,
Coordinator